

**Minutes**  
**King County Rural Forest Commission**  
**May 11, 2005**  
**Preston Community Center**

*Commissioners present:* Alex Kamola, Dennis Dart, Jim Franzel, Doug McClelland, Ole Una, Doug Schindler and Julie Stangell

*Commissioners absent:* Lee Witter Kahn, Leonard Guss, Jean Bouffard, Randy Sandin and Mike Reed

*Exofficio member present:* Amy Grotta

*Staff:* Kathy Creahan, Kristi McClelland, Linda Vane, Bill Loeber and Benj Wadsworth

*Guests:* Jeanette McKague, King County Council staff; Boyd Norton, Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR); Ron Baum, Hollywood Hills Stewardship Alliance; and Pat Larkin.

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

**Meeting Summary**

*Action Items:*

1. Alex Kamola will send a letter to the King County Executive with the Rural Forest Commission's (RFC) recommendation concerning certification of County-owned forest lands. Doug McClelland will prepare a first draft and circulate it to the RFC members.
2. Commissioners will send Kristi McClelland any suggestions they may have for web links to be added to the fire safety brochure.
3. A group will work with Mark Isaacson to develop long term funding options for the Forestry Program. RFC members Alex Kamola, Dennis Dart, Doug Schindler, and Doug McClelland volunteered as did Jeannette McKague. Linda will assist with setting up the meeting.
4. Linda will follow up with Dennis Dart and Kristi McClelland regarding the field trip for the July 13<sup>th</sup> RFC meeting.
5. Commissioners will email to Linda any comments on the proposed forestry grant program.
6. Commissioner will let Linda know if any corrections are needed in RFC roster and will let her know if they have recommendations for filling vacancies on the commission.

*Motions:*

Motion 1-0511 "To adopt the March 9, 2005 minutes as written." The motion was passed unanimously.

**Chair Report – Alex Kamola**

As agreed at the March meeting, Alex sent a letter to Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels expressing the Commission's continued support for the use of sites throughout the City of Seattle as receiving sites in the Transfer of Development Rights program. The minutes for the March meeting were approved as written by unanimous agreement.

## **Staff Reports**

Linda Vane

Linda thanked the commissioners for achieving 100% compliance in completing the annual Statement of Financial and Other Interests. She distributed a draft proposal for the establishment of King County *Community Forestry Grants*. An electronic version of the proposal will be emailed to the commissioners and Linda requested that commissioners email her any comments or recommendations. Linda also requested assistance from the commissioners in recruiting applicants for vacant seats on the commission. Those with an interest in serving should contact Linda by email at [linda.vane@metrokc.gov](mailto:linda.vane@metrokc.gov) or by telephone at 206-296-8042.

Kathy Creahan

*Cedar-Green Initiative.* Kathy reported that a deal has been negotiated among the City of Black Diamond, Plum Creek Timber Company and King County, with the Cascade Land Conservancy acting as an advisor. The complex agreement involves the City bringing a section of Plum Creek land into the urban area by annexation, Plum Creek giving up development rights to 1,600 acres on Ravensdale Ridge just northeast of the city, and the conservation of several smaller parcels for public use. In addition, King County will transfer Lake Sawyer Park into city ownership. Associated with this, Washington State hopes to receive federal Forest Legacy Program funding to secure other Plum Creek land in the vicinity. The deal is significant for the Forestry Program and the RFC because it will keep a large block of land in active forestry. Kathy recalled that when the deal first began to take shape nine years ago, this was not considered a priority. It shows that King County and the City of Black Diamond have come to recognize the value of forestry and is an indication that the RFC has been successful in getting their message across. The RFC recommended that Michele Connor of the Cascade Land Conservancy be invited to speak at the next meeting.

*Rural Economic Strategy Update.* Kathy handed out an update from Julia Larson, King County Rural Economic Strategy Coordinator, on her activities since her meeting with the RFC in March. Her office is putting together a rural resources web site. They would like to post sample business plans, so if commissioners have anything that would be useful to other landowners, please contact Julia [[julia.larson@metrokc.gov](mailto:julia.larson@metrokc.gov)]. Secondly, Julia and her colleagues followed up with the Vashon Forest Stewards and will help them get a kiln on their property. Acquisition of a kiln will allow the Forest Stewards to dry the wood that they are milling.

## **Fire Interface Best Management Practices Task Force**

Jim Rankin, King County Fire Marshall

Jim has been working with a task force to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for community fire planning. The BMPs will show property owners how they can make their homes safe from wildfire by performing certain activities around their homes. This year there is special concern with drought and the fire season is likely to start early. The task force is putting together something quickly to let people know what they can do. There is a time constraint in that the King County Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) will issue a burning ban on May 16 and they would like to issue information about how to protect one's home at about the same time. Jim passed out the text of the draft brochure on how to create

“defensible space.” Mainly the techniques involve removing fuels from close to roof or chimney, thinning vegetation that is near the ground, etc. DDES will make sure that what they recommend will not be in conflict with King County’s new Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). The brochure will also provide contact information. Specifically, the last page of the brochure has links to web sites. Jim asked the RFC to provide any comments or suggestions regarding the draft brochure to him or Kristi McClelland as soon as possible.

In response to a question about cost share programs, Kristi McClelland said that the Forestry Program has been working with the Tolt River Highlands community, who just got their community fire plan approved. Once a group has a plan, they are eligible for federal grants, but those dollars are targeted to higher risk areas. This means that in our area we have to do planning and implementation ourselves. In addition, the DDES web site provides information on alternative means of dealing with wood waste other than burning. There also will be a new, no-cost permit for clearing 30 feet surrounding the home under these fire BMPs. Jim has asked for the permit just so they can keep the local fire districts apprised of landowners who are taking the initiative to make their homes safe. The BMP document will be going through the public rule process later this year.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

Julie Stangell, Hancock Timber

*CAO Implementation regarding Forestry.* On March 29 representatives of the RFC [Dennis Dart, Julie Stangell, Lee Kahn, and Alex Kamola] and staffer Kristi McClelland made a trip to the Tolt River Highlands, a former Weyerhaeuser plantation, with Randy Sandin and Jon Pederson of King County DDES. Julie said the area as is characterized by a lot of hardwoods mixed in with 20-year-old douglas firs. The forest there is in desperate need of thinning, with extensive wind and ice damage. The group met with the landowner and DDES staff to learn how the County’s permit processes are working and to compare the old rules with the new rules being developed in connection with the CAO. The RFC wanted to find out how small forest landowners can do forest management, harvest some trees, do some thinning, create home sites and not have a moratorium placed on their property. Alex pointed out that one of the big questions is: what if the landowner has not decided where to build and wants to be able to change the site later on? Kristi McClelland agreed that this is an issue; that for example, oftentimes once landowners thin some trees it changes their perspective on the property and they may change their minds about where their houses should go. Kristi said the two outstanding issues that were identified during the field trip were that there is as yet nothing listed on the DDES website to tell people what the process is for getting relief from the moratorium. Landowners are reluctant to make decisions regarding their property without written rules from DDES. The second major question on people’s minds is how the relationship between the Conversion Option Harvest Plan (COHP) and the DNR permit will work. Kristi explained that Randy Sandin said if the landowner does not know what they want to develop, the COHP should include everything that could possibly be developed and everything else should be included in the DNR permit. This means we are still left with the question of how one reduces the permit cost in COHP if that is a big portion of the property. DDES said that landowners should make their harvest prescriptions as complete as possible and then join together and batch their permits, so DDES will only have

to visit the area once. Dennis Dart disclosed that his company, International Forestry Consultants, Inc., is currently working for eight landowners in the Tolt River Triangle area that are doing just this.

Julie Stangell thanked Kristi McClelland, Kathy Creahan and Randy Sandin, who came to a Society of American Foresters meeting to present on the CAO.

### **Meet the Water and Land Resources Division's new Division Director**

Mark Isaacson, Division Director

Mark has just been named to the post of King County Water and Land Resources Division Director. He previously served as the Assistant Division Director under Daryl Grigsby. Mark thanked the RFC members for their valued volunteer service as members of the commission. Mark announced that he has recommended that there be no reductions in the Forestry Program budget in 2006. This recommendation will go to the County Executive's office and the Council where things could change. Executive Sims is, however, very committed to forestry. Seeing the need to retain the Snoqualmie Forest as working forest land for example, he was the driver behind King County's purchase of the development rights for the property [[http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/news/2004/0904/LG\\_LP\\_Snoqualmie\\_Forest\\_Funding.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/news/2004/0904/LG_LP_Snoqualmie_Forest_Funding.htm)].

Mark characterized the Water and Land Resources Division budget as being largely focused on the surface water utility, capital improvement projects and ensuring water quality. This presents a challenge to finding funding for relatively small programs like Forestry in future years. As a utility fund, the Division projects going from \$18 million today to about \$9 million less than five years from now. In the short term, the Division is reorganizing as a means of saving money and will reduce from nine sections down to seven in 2006. The Office of Rural and Resource Programs, where the Forestry Program resides, will remain and will absorb some additional functions such as acquisitions and the basin stewards. For the long term Mark asked the RFC to help him get to an answer for funding that does not entirely rely on surface water management fees. It was proposed that members of the commission meet with key County Council staff, Executive Office staff, Forestry Program staff and Mark to explore ways to fund and deliver Forestry Program services in the future. RFC members Alex Kamola, Dennis Dart, Doug Schindler, and Doug McClelland volunteered as did Jeannette McKague.

### **Forest Certification of King County Lands**

Kathy Creahan and Alex Kamola

Kathy provided background on the subject. King County is looking into seeking Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) [<http://www.fscus.org/>] certification of the lands it now owns. The RFC was asked to provide input as to whether the County should seek such certification. An RFC sub-group was set up to discuss the pros and cons and Kathy wrote up a summary, which was distributed to the members via email prior to this meeting. The sub-group is now coming back to the full commission with the intention of developing a recommendation from the RFC and perhaps a letter to the County Executive. The goal is to reach a common viewpoint by the end of this meeting.

A lengthy discussion among the commissioners ensued. Among the points made were:

- Certification is a recognition of the things that a land management agency is doing well.
- Certification involves costs, such as:
  - Indirect costs, beyond the cost of the certificate, which can be higher than direct costs;
  - Several layers of process and tracking are added to everything that the land manager does;
  - Costs are relatively higher for small operations because they cannot spread them out across large sales.
- King County has a lot of work to do to determine what the actual costs of participation in a certification program would be and the value of the benefits.
- To large forest landowners certification is what you do to maintain market share. There is a huge cost involved, but it does maintain market share.
- The rules and processes involved in certification are not always clear. Standards for forests in western Washington are more complex than in other areas, e.g., California, and for that reason it can be harder to become certified. The standards for FSC are developed regionally, so they differ among areas. Forest practice regulations and the ecological makeup of forests also differ among states.
- If the costs of FSC certification are not recovered from harvests, it could be seen as a waste of taxpayer dollars.
- Some rural residents may feel that if King County pursues certification of county-owned lands, this will ultimately lead to more government regulation of private lands.
- Reaction by rural areas will not necessarily be negative. Residents may see the County as an example that small landowners can successfully navigate the certification process.
- Very few people know that certification exists and very few know that the County harvests.

The consensus of the RFC was that although forest certification has benefits, King County should wait before pursuing certification. Doug McClelland will draft a letter from Alex Kamola on behalf of the RFC and will email the draft around the members for comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

### ***Next meeting***

The next regularly scheduled meeting is July 13, 2005, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It will be a field trip leaving from the Preston Community Center. Kristi McClelland and Dennis Dart will present on forest management issues faced by small forest landowners in the Tolt Triangle area.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

206-296-8042 or [linda.vane@metrokc.gov](mailto:linda.vane@metrokc.gov)